Visual Design Quick Reference

Layout Principle	Definition
Establish a grid	• Use a columnar grid to help parameterize navigation, banner and content areas. • Choose the structure for the grid based on the unique challenges of the layout. • The more complex the grid (*i.e.*, more horizontal and vertical alignment points), the more options the designer has.

Visual attributes control focus

Occulometer studies show that people's eyes tend to move from:

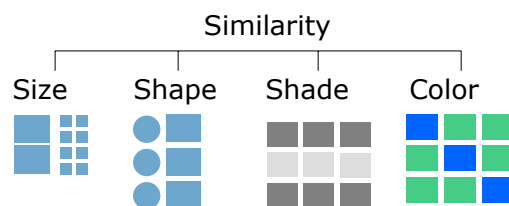| Large to small Size	Irregular to regular Shape	Dark to light Shade	Saturated to unsaturated Color

People group elements in specific ways

Gestalt principles of grouping that apply to page design:

Similarity — Size, Shape, Shade, Color | Proximity | Common Region | Connectedness

| Color Principle	Definition
Usability benefits of color	• Gives aesthetic value • Shows relationships • Supports a theme or brand • Draws attention • Provides grouping
Using color as a unique code	When using color as the only code to increase identification of an item: • Studies show that one color dramatically speeds search time. • More than six colors can eliminate the benefits of color and slow down performance.
Legibility issues	• Make text/background ratio high in contrast. • Keep backgrounds low contrast and simple to reduce visual noise. • Do not create pure red or blue text on white background – chromatic aberration. • Do not use highly saturated colors together, *i.e.*, red and blue – chromostereopsis.
Know how color affects your users	Make sure your message is clear without color. • 9% of men and .5% of women cannot perceive differences between some or all colors. • Cultural associations influence responses to color.
Use Web-safe colors	• Colors can dither when you don't use the Web-safe color palette. • Web-safe colors ensure cross-platform consistency.
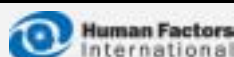
Graphic Function	Definition	
Graphics can be superior to text	Graphic images are: • Perceived faster than text • Remembered better • Able to say more with less	Graphics have three main functions: • Help users make decisions • Communicate information • Make site more appealing
Content graphics	• Provide the data to answer the questions • Help users make a decision • Can summarize a large set of data	
Icon graphics	• Add meaning to links • Are associated with text links • Ensure they fit the task and context	
Layout graphics	• Help delineate, group, or divide content • Never mentioned by users, but helpful	
Thematic graphics	• Support a theme or metaphor • Appropriate when theme is important	
Marketing graphics	• Support a brand • Don't force user to scroll past them for the important content	

Typography Principle	Definition	
Use one or two type families	• If you wish to use two type families, make sure they are distinctly different. • Within one type family vary weight and size for emphasis.	
Legibility rules	• Use 10 point or larger for all text. • Black text on white background is most legible. • Don't over-emphasize. Make bold or larger text size, not both. • Avoid italics. • Set leading 3-4 points larger than type size (*e.g.,* for 14 point Times New Roman, use 18 point leading). • Align left, rag right. The eye anchors on the vertical line of the left margin, makes reading easier. • Avoid all capital letters for running text. It slows reading 14-20%.	
Text in graphics	• Use ALT tags. • Anti-alias large type, but not small.	10 point anti-aliased type 10 point bitmapped type